

MINUTES
DBVI REHABILITATION COUNCIL
Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired
Headquarters Building
397 Azalea Avenue, Richmond, VA
June 9, 2017

SRC Attendees

Christine Appert, Charlottesville, Former Recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation Services; Rebecca Bridges, Chair, SRC, represents Business, Industry and Labor; Irene Conlin, Virginia Beach, Representative of an Individual who is blind, has multiple disabilities, and has difficulty representing him or herself or is unable due to disabilities to represent him or herself; Wanda Council, Newport News, VA, represents the Virginia Department of Education; Nicole Drummond, Falls Church, represents Virginia's Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center; Justin Graves, Fredericksburg, represents Business, Industry and Labor; Ken Jessup, Virginia Beach, represents Disability Advocacy Group; Larysa Kautz, Alexandria, Representative of Community Rehabilitation Services Program Provider; Chris Martin, Ashland, Representative of Business, Industry, and Labor; Mark Roane, Richmond, Former or Current Recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation Services; Shelesha Taylor, Richmond, represents the federally mandated Client Assistance Program (CAP); Karen Walker, Ashland, Business, Industry, and Labor.

Members Absent

Jeanne Armentrout, Roanoke, represents the Virginia Workforce Board; Isaac Crisp, VR Counselor, Richmond Regional Office, DBVI, Ex-Officio Member; Ray Hopkins, Richmond, Commissioner, DBVI, Ex-Officio Member; Jill Nerby, Charlottesville, Former Recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

Members of the Public

None.

DBVI Staff to the SRC

Jessica Collette, Executive Assistant, DBVI; Rick Mitchell, Deputy Commissioner for Services, DBVI.

Welcome and Introductions

Vice-chairman Ken Jessup asked members to introduce themselves and welcomed new members.

Tour of VRCBVI

Members toured the Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired.

Call to Order

Chairwoman Bridges called the meeting to order.

Adoption of Agenda

Mr. Ken Jessup moved to adopt agenda; Mr. Justin Graves seconded and motion passed unanimously.

Approval of March 2017 Meeting Minutes

Mr. Justin Graves moved to approve the March 2017 meeting minutes; Ms. Irene Conlin seconded and motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

None.

DBVI Agency Report – *Rick Mitchell*

Dr. Mitchell opened the floor for questions in regards to the tour of VRCBVI. Chairwoman Bridges questioned the average amount of time individuals stayed at the Center. Dr. Mitchell commented that each individual is given a customized training scheduled based on their need. The average stay is around 9 months for the full program.

Later this month, DBVI will host the Robotic and Cyber Security Academy. This is a joint project with the Department of Aging and Rehabilitation Services. Currently 26 participants are expected to stay on campus for a total of five days and learn how to code and program a bo-bot. The week will end with a graduation type ceremony on Friday. There will also be a time for DBVI and DARS to speak with the participant's parents and discuss the option of credentials and other higher education opportunities. After the academy, students will take home a laptop, their bo-bot and a year worth of assignments to continue working on. After a year, if the student continues to work on their bo-bot and completes all assignments, they will be able to keep these items. DBVI has worked with the creators of the curriculum to ensure the software that is to be used is completely accessible.

VRCBVI will host the LIFE and LEAP programs again this year. There are currently eight students enrolled in the LEAP program and 22 students in the LIFE program.

The Business Relations Unit is seeing many successes resulting in internships, work experiences – both paid and unpaid, and job placements. The Unit is also helping clients participate in informational interviews as practice with an employer. There have been instances where the employer was so impressed with the applicant they offered them a position. The Business Relations Specialist in NOVA has been participating in a federal job club in conjunction with DARS and has been able to connect clients with federal jobs, some being six-figure jobs.

Old and/or New Business – *Rebecca Bridges*

Annual Report Updates and Action Items – *Christine Appert*

Ms. Appert and Chairwoman Bridges have begun to look at the framework for this year's Annual Report. Anyone who would like to help on the whole report or specific sections is welcome. Mr. Graves volunteered to help identify and assemble success stories. He mentioned that he would like to identify eight experiences to highlight, but realistically only use four. Another area that Chairwoman Bridges would like help on is identifying program highlights, including highlights from regional offices.

Ms. Conlin volunteered to help with copy editing and review.

Chairwoman Bridges and Ms. Appert will reach out to Ms. Hinterlong and walk through the framework and explain each piece. The goal date to have the majority of the report finished is September. **Ms. Collette will send out last year's annual report for review by the Council members.**

DBVI SRC to defer to DARS SRC on the contract renewal for the hearing officers – *Rick Mitchell*

Dr. Mitchell explained that there is a review process for situations where a client and DBVI staffer may disagree on services provided. Ideally, and most often, any issue is resolved at the lowest level possible. However, there is an administrative review process that escalates from the regional manager up to the Commissioner. Clients do have the option of requesting a fair hearing either after or during the administrative process.

If a client requests a fair hearing, the case goes to a Fair Hearing Officer, which has no affiliation to the Agency. Currently DARS and DBVI share hearing officers. Two officers have contracts up for renewal and DBVI SRC has the option to defer to DARS SRC to renew these contracts. Several members spoke that they would like to review these contracts. Ms. Larysa Kautz moved for the SRC to create a committee consisting of herself and Ms. Shelesha Taylor to review contract renewals of the fair hearing officers and approve on the behalf of the DBVI SRC. Mr. Roane seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

File Sharing Alternatives to Dropbox – *Rick Mitchell*

No updates at this time, but Dr. Mitchell will follow up with the Commissioner on updates and send to the Council.

Nominating Committee – *Rebecca Bridges*

At the September meeting elections for Chair and Vice-Chair need to be held. Mr. Chris Martin and Ms. Wanda Council were appointed as the Nominating Committee. Any Council member interested can reach out to either for them to be included in the nomination.

Date of next meeting – September 8, 2017

Looking toward the next meeting the following items need to be added to the agenda:

- Update on the Fair Hearing Officer contract review
- SRC representative to CSAVR/ NCSAB meetings in Greenville, SC
- Photo of the SRC for the 2017 Annual Report
- Member spotlight for two members; Chairwoman Bridges will reach out to members
- Chair and Vice-Chair elections
- Working Lunch topic – regional office services and highlights from each office

Adjournment

Mr. Ken Jessup adjourned the meeting.